



Vol. 1 Issue 2

# THE 38TH PARALLEL

KOREA50™

A publication to thank, honor, and remember the Korean War Veteran

## Congress supports vets

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Surrounded by Korean War veterans and a delegation of members of Congress who served in Korea, Representative Tom Ewing announced the introduction of a resolution before Congress honoring the veterans and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Korean War.

“It disturbs me that the Korean War is often referred to as ‘the forgotten victory,’” Ewing (R.-Ill.) said. “During the war, hundreds of thousands Americans servicemen and women were wounded, or, paid the ultimate sacrifice to stop the spread of communism in the Pacific Rim and beyond. The Korean War helped to lay the groundwork that serves as the foundation for the peaceful world in which we now live. I want the surviv-

ing veterans all across our nation, as well as the friends and family of those killed to know their sacrifice will *never* be forgotten.”

On June 25, 1950, the Communist forces of North Korea crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel and invaded South Korea. Two days later, President Harry S. Truman called on America’s military to intervene. Over the next three years, 5,720,000 served in the war.

Congressman Bob Stump (R-AZ), Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, said, “Unfortunately, as time passes, sometimes the younger generations fail to see the significance of the sacrifices our veterans have made. This resolution clearly shows this Congress’ commit-

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Photo by Senior Airman Jeffrey Allen

Contents in The 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or the Department of Defense. Type in our website address at <http://korea50.army.mil> to learn more about the Korean War.



Courtesy photo

### Celebration time

Korean Folk Dancers perform during the dedication of the Korean War Memorial in Tallahassee, Fla. on Dec. 10. The Korean War Veterans Association Chapter 174 hosted the event. Commemorative Communities throughout the nation are honoring their veterans well ahead of the official kickoff in June. More than 700 organizations nationwide are commemorative communities.

# Products team schools teachers on resources

**ORLANDO, Fla.** — The Education and Product Development Team of the Department of Defense 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee grabbed its products and headed south to show educators around the country how to recapture history.

At the Annual Conference of the National Council of Social Studies Nov. 18-21, the team of four enlightened more than 3,000 teachers, school administrators and curriculum specialists on ways students can learn the annals of the Korean War and received a warm welcome. The visit resulted in more than 900 requests for materials.

"The teachers were very receptive and excited about our educational products," said Lt. Col. Martha V. Smyth, director, education and product development for the committee. "We are giving them first-rate items developed to meet the national history and social studies standards at each grade level."

American History and the Korean War are traditionally taught in the fifth grade and again in high school — occasionally these topics are taught in seventh or eighth grade.

The Korean War, often referred to

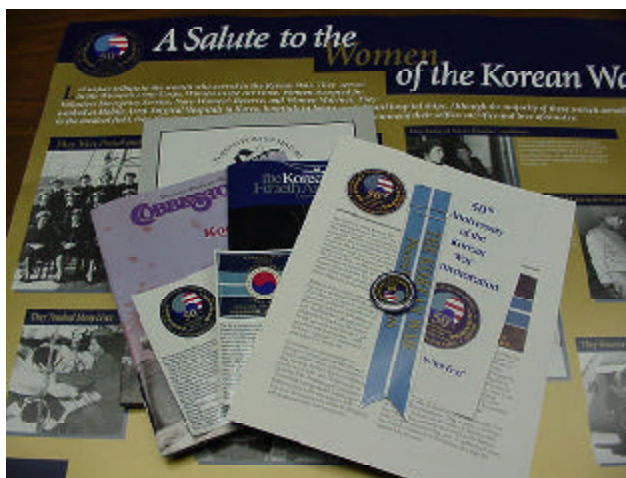
as "The Forgotten War", is given minimal space in history textbooks. Landing on the heels of World War II, the Korean War was fought exclusively in the Pacific from 1950-1953. During that time, great strides were made in military, from air-to-air flying both day and night, to psychological warfare.

The materials are designed to augment textbooks and provide background information to the teachers. The items are geared toward the students in middle school and high school.

The basic classroom kit includes copies of a colorful poster, designed by *Washington Post* cartoonist Patrick Reynolds, that lists key people, places and equipment involved in the war; a chronology poster listing the war's significant events; a Teacher's Guide with classroom activities, copies of a Korean War issue of *Cobblestone* magazine; stickers and bookmarks. All items are available to schools free of charge.

Students and teachers can order educational products as well as learn more about "The Forgotten War" through the committee's website at <http://Korea50.army.mil>.

Books, pamphlets and posters are some of the many products the committee has on hand to commemorate the Korean War.



Courtesy photo

## Korean War 50th Anniversary Commemoration Events

Below is a list of the major local, national and international level events for the first commemorative year.

### May 28, 2000

National Memorial Day Concert  
Dedicated to Korean War veterans: U.S. Capitol

### May 29, 2000

Memorial Day Breakfast and Wreath Laying: Washington, D.C.

### June 23, 2000

Korean War 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration Symposium: University of Pittsburgh

### June 25, 2000

National Commemoration Opening Ceremony: Seoul, Republic of Korea and Washington, D.C.

Dedication of Korean War Memorial: Columbia, S.C.

### June 28, 2000

Task Force Smith Commemoration: Arlington Cemetery, Arlington, Va.

### July 5, 2000

Task Force Smith Commemoration: Suwon, Republic of Korea

### Sept. 13, 2000

Breakout of Pusan Perimeter  
Taegu, ROK

### Sept. 15-17, 2000

Inchon Landing  
Norfolk, Va.

**Correction:** The article on Page 4 of Issue 1 should be the Retired Officers Association or ROA, not TROA. The 38th Parallel regrets any inconveniences.

# Army outlines phases of No Gun Ri review

**WASHINGTON** — As part of the Army's ongoing effort to conduct a full and comprehensive review of the No Gun Ri bridge incident, the Secretary of the Army, Louis Caldera, has approved a four phase plan that will ultimately lead to a written report for public release.

The approved plan incorporates the following phases: Phase I - Preparation; Phase II - Research and Interviews; Phase III - Review and Analysis; and Phase IV - Final Report.

"Your task is to ensure that the review is thorough and pursues every reasonable lead to enable us to determine the facts as quickly and accurately as possible," Caldera wrote in the directive to Lt. Gen. Michael Ackerman, the Army's Inspector General and head of the IG Review Team charged with implementing the plan.

"Though the review process is complex, our charter is relatively simple: To determine the facts of what happened at the No Gun Ri bridge, no matter where they may lead, and to cooperate fully with our counterparts from the Republic of Korea" Ackerman said. (*Army News Service*)

## Congress from page 1

ment to recognizing and remembering those who have given so much to our nation."

Norbert Reiner, the executive Director of the Korean War Veterans Association said "Korean War Veterans, and the importance of this War were not recognized at the time. Now history has proved its significance. This anniversary celebration is a time when the Korean War Veterans are finally being recognized by our nation. They are greatly appreciative that the term 'forgotten' is now being reversed"

Ewing's district is home to the future site of the Korean War Veterans



*Soldiers face each other at the border.*

National Museum and Library. The project's goal is to interview Korean War Veterans until the museum owns the largest holding of Korean War veteran interviews in the world. When completed, it will be the only national repository in which to house three-dimensional artifacts, such as books and manuscripts, maps and photographs, and military and civilian documents associated with the Korean War.

More information about the museum project, as well as donation information can be found at [www.theforgottenvictory.org](http://www.theforgottenvictory.org). (*Courtesy DoD news service*)

## This Date in History

### 1950

October – Arrival of first Greek Army forces in Korea.

Oct. 19 -- Arrival of Turkish forces.

Oct. 24 – Arrival of first Netherlands forces in Korea.

November – First jet-to-jet air combat in history.

Nov. 20 – Arrival of India's 60<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance and Surgical unit.

Nov. 25 – Chinese forces enter combat in Korea.

Nov. 29 – Arrival of first French forces in Korea.

Dec. 9 – Arrival of Greek Battalion at Pusan.

Dec. 16 – President Truman declares State of National Emergency.

Dec. 23 – General Mathew B. Ridgway replaces Lt. Gen. Walton Walker, killed in a motor accident, as 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Army Commander.

Dec. 31 – New Chinese offensive begins.

### 1951

Oct. 25 – Truce talks transferred to Panmunjom.

Nov. 12 – General Ridgway orders end of U.N. ground offensive military action and implements "active defense" strategy.

Nov. 27 – Agreement reached at Panmunjom on line of military demarcation and Demilitarized Zone. Agreement subsequently invalidated Dec. 27.

### 1952

November – Dogfight between U.S. Naval aircraft and Soviet MiG-15s near carrier Oriskany; it is the only known direct attempt by Soviet airpower to attack U.N. sea forces.

Nov. 4 – Dwight Eisenhower elected President of the U.S.

Dec. 2-5 President-Elect Eisenhower tours Korea to fulfill his election pledge, "I Will go to Korea."

### 1953

Aug. 23-December – Operation Big Switch exchanges all POWs willing to be repatriated.

**Opening Ceremonies for the Korean War**  
**Commemoration is June 25.**





Photo by JOC Melinda Jensen

## Displaying history

Tech. Sgt. Valerie Phelps from the Korean War 50th Anniversary Commemoration Committee displays two posters during the quarterly Veterans Service Organizations meeting at Fort Belvoir, Va. Jan. 28. More than 70 members attended the meeting. Several topics for discussion included the products and services the committee offers as well as the Defense Department's upcoming events the committee will support during the commemoration period that starts June 25.

# Navy christens ship after U.S. Army soldier

The U.S. Navy christened its newest roll-on/roll-off cargo ship at New Orleans, La., Jan. 8, 2000 after a Korean War soldier.

The USNS Pililaau honor Army Pfc. Herbert K. Pililaau, awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for the valiant defense of his position near Pia-ri, Korea, Sept. 17, 1951. While defending a key piece of terrain on "Heartbreak Ridge," his company held back enemy assaults until the unit was ordered to withdraw due to a shortage of ammunition. Voluntarily remaining behind to cover the withdrawal, Pililaau fired his remaining automatic weapons ammunition and grenades into the enemy, then fought hand-to-hand with trench knife and bare fists until he was mortally wounded. When the position was subsequently recaptured, 40 enemy dead were found nearby.

Pililaau, assigned to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, born in 1928 in Waianae, Oahu and entered service there. Former Secretary of the Navy Sean O'Keefe will deliver the ceremony's principal address. Agnes Kuumaewa Pilila'au Kim, sister of the ship's namesake, and Polly Ellis, wife of Navy Adm. James O. Ellis Jr., commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe, will serve as ship's co-sponsors. In the time-honored Navy tradition, Kim and Ellis will broke a bottle of champagne across the bow to formally name the ship.

The fifth in the Bob Hope class of large, medium speed,



(Courtesy AFIS)

**The Navy could not ignore the heroism of Korean War veteran Army Pfc. Herbert Pililaau.**

roll-on/roll-off (LMSR) sealift ships, USNS Pililaau is a non-combatant vessel built by Litton-Avondale Industries in New Orleans, La. It will be crewed by civilian mariners and operated by the Navy's Military Sealift Command. LMSR ships are ideal for loading military combat equipment and combat support equipment needed overseas and for resupplying military Services with necessary equipment and supplies during national crisis. The ship's six-deck interior has a cargo carrying capacity of approximately 390,000 square feet and its roll-on/roll-off design makes it ideal for transporting helicopters, tanks and other wheeled and tracked military vehicles.

Two 110-ton single pedestal twin cranes make it possible to load and unload cargo where shoreside infrastructure is limited or non-existent. A commercial helicopter deck enables emergency, daytime landings. USNS Pililaau is 950 feet in length, has a beam of 106 feet, and displaces approximately 62,000 long tons. The diesel-powered ship will be able to sustain speeds up to 24 knots. (Courtesy U.S. Navy News Service)

# African Americans aid Total Force

**WASHINGTON** — African Americans in the Army Reserve have made and continue to make more history than can be confined to Black History Month in February.

Black Americans have been part of the Army Reserve since World War I. Black reservists called up for combat duty when the Korean War broke out they found themselves in all-black units such as the 24th Infantry Regiment. The 1954 "Project Clear" study came to the same conclusion that the Army learned by combat experience in Korea: Integration would enhance effectiveness. That same year, the last all-black unit was disbanded.

African Americans today are full and integral parts of the Army Reserve team. Blacks make up 25.4 percent of the Army Reserve today — more than 52,000 African-Americans

serve in the Selected Reserve. Just as the Army cannot do its mission without the Army Reserve, then, the Army Reserve cannot do its missions without its black citizen-soldiers.

At present, nine black Army Reserve general officers or promotable colonels serve on active duty; three more are in the Standby Inactive Reserve. They serve as commanders or deputy commanders of major Army Reserve commands or as senior staff officers at Army-level organizations. The Army Reserve's first black general officer was John Q.T. King, a World War II veteran who became a brigadier general on Feb. 8, 1974. In December 1999, Col. Bernard Taylor Jr., an African American, became the Army Reserve deputy chief for the Individual Mobilization Augment program.

Command Sgt. Maj. Collin L.

Younger, an African American, is the fifth senior enlisted adviser to the assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs. Previously, he had been simultaneously the command sergeant major of the Army Reserve and the first command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Reserve Command in Atlanta. Prior to his current duty, he was installation command sergeant major at Fort Dix, N.J.

Command Sgt. Maj. Sheila Williams, commandant of the NCO Academy at Fort Lewis, Wash. She's the first black woman to attain the rank of command sergeant major on Active Guard/Reserve status.

Black reservists make names for themselves outside their military duties, too. In 1996, 1st Lt. Ruthie Bolton became the first Army reservist to make the U.S. Olympic women's basketball team. (AFIS)



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## Corporate Outreach Wants You

Corporations can help raise the visibility of accomplishments of Korean War veterans by supporting international and nationally scheduled events, or conducting corporation-oriented functions. Events can range from luncheons honoring veterans and their families, to supporting school programs that teach the history of this era. For more information contact Lt. Col. Ward Scott in the corporate outreach division at:

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[http://www.Honor & Remember@hqda.army.mil](http://www.Honor&Remember@hqda.army.mil).

## Remembering the Korean War Veterans; *Freedom Is Not Free* *‘Captured’*

As told to Navy Chief Journalist Milinda D. Jensen,  
50th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee

*Edmund L. Reel joined the Army September 24, 1947. In February 1948, he was sent to Korea to guard the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. He was assigned to Company ‘T’ 7th Division, 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment. In December 1948, his unit was sent to Camp Crawford, Hokkaido, Japan. In August 1950, Reel found himself in the first battle in Pusan, Korea and later at P’yongyang, North Korea as a prisoner of war.*



*Courtesy photo*

*“We were taken to a staging area known as the apple orchard where we were prepared for battle. My first battle was known as the battle of the Bowling Alley. It was named this because of the land terrain. This battle lasted a few days.”*

**Reel’s battalion took a heavy loss in the battle.**

*“After regrouping, our company commander told us we were pushing on towards Seoul, Korea and then on north to P’yongyang. Our company commander also told us that the war was over.”*

**Even if that had been true, the men of ‘M’ Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary Division 8th Regiment, continued to push to the Yula River. It was here that they set up camp. On November 1, 1950, the regiment was attacked by Chinese troops.**

*“After a fierce battle with the Chinese our men started to disperse to the mountain sides. At daybreak, we started infiltrating into an open field where our tanks were stationed. There, a perimeter was formed and I retrieved an 81 mortar and ammo and set up in a hole in the center of the perimeter and began firing continuously.”*

**By late evening, the Chinese began a firefight by using white phosphorous.**

**On Nov. 2, 1950, Reel was captured.**



*Courtesy photo*

*“As dusk was approaching, one of our doctors said that he was going to surrender the wounded. There were 32 of us who left the perimeter in a column. I was fifth from the rear, running down the mountain with the Chinese in pursuit.”*

Reel’s first thought was to get rid of anything that would endanger his life. Carrying a .45 caliber pistol generally meant that you were high enough up the chain of command to be important. It was the first thing Reel threw into the rice paddy.

*“After throwing my pistol away, I felt like I had thrown the flag away. I*

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***thought that I'd never see my loved ones again."***

The Chinese took small groups of the prisoners into an enclosed area and began the process of turning Soldiers into POW's.

***"Five of us were herded into a barn and searched. Most of us were slapped upside the head a few times. I had my testament (small version of the bible) in my pocket. I fell to my knees and opened the testament. It fell open to the Last Supper."***

The Chinese took the dog tags of the other Soldiers, all except Reel's.

Marched to Chinese headquarters, the Soldiers were told to sit down in the courtyard. They were given frozen turnips to eat. At dark, they marched again. This time to a pine wood area where the original 32 captured Americans were fed rice. The Soldiers were told not to be afraid.

***"I felt like maybe I was safe because we were some of the first to be captured."***

Carrying the wounded on stretchers, the Soldiers marched for the next 30 days, marching only at night, hidden and confined during the day. Wading through streams and rivers increased the frostbite on ears, fingers and toes, Reel continued walking with shrapnel in his left knee from an exploding Chinese hand grenade.

At P'yongyang the captives were turned over to North Korean troops. Because the allies were conducting intensive daily air strikes in the area, the POW's were moved to a camp in 'Death Valley.'

***"We started losing men from starvation and wounds. We were living, really existing in mud shacks, about 30 men to a shack."***

The POW's stayed in 'Death Valley' for about 30 days

before they were moved back to P'yongyang. The living conditions were considered better at P'yongyang mainly because there was a hospital and community compound. The only catch was that POW's had to be 'good boys' listening to and cooperating with the communist propaganda forced on them.

***"We were made to unload barges of food and wood."***

In January 1951, Reel had pneumonia. He remembers being weak and sick. He also remembers a time he was hurt even worse.

***"I was carrying a bag of rice. It weighed about 150 pounds. I stepped into a hole, fell forward and the bag fell on top of me, smashing me."***

In April 1951, the Chinese took over as guardians for the prisoners. Reel had been wearing the same clothes for eight months.

***"At first the North Koreans were in charge, then the Chinese. The Chinese treated us more humanly. Both tried to integrate us into their way of thinking—communism. A group of us became reactionaries. We wouldn't take their studies and resisted all their communist teachings. About 150 of us were taken to Anson, Camp #3, a hard labor camp."***

Hard labor consisted of getting up at 6 a.m., exercising, then running to the river to wash their faces. Then they had to study communist literature until breakfast. After eating a small bowl sorghum (seeds similar to wheat), the prisoners then went up into the mountains to cut firewood and large poles.

***"The winter of 1951, we were not allowed to use any of the wood for fires, wood that we had cut and hauled all that summer. The following summer we refused to cut any***  
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**Reel from page 7**

*more wood.”*

The next winter, the POWs were allowed to build fires. Six-days a week they worked. On Sundays, they were allowed to wash their clothes in the river and clean their compound.

Reel survived the next 34 months of captivity. He contributes his survival to a hearty country upbringing and belief in God, and he remembers being told that the war was over.

*“We weren’t excited because we didn’t believe it. When we saw the Army trucks coming through, then we believed it.”*

Reel was released during the ‘Big Switch’ at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in ‘Freedom Village.’

*“I’m free. That’s what I was thinking as I walked*

*across the Freedom Bridge and saw the American soldiers and the flag. They held the ship over for an extra day so we could go home. It was the same ship that had brought me over three years before, the USNS (United States Naval Ship) General John Pope.”*

*Reel made the decision to stay on active duty. Before the war, he was training national guardsmen, a job he liked. After the war, he served as a recruiter for three years, becoming the first Army recruiter for Weston, W. VA. After another 19 years as career counselor with duty stations in Southern European Task Force (STEF), Italy; Fort Meade, Maryland and, Walter Reed Hospital Headquarters, Reel retired as a Command Sergeant Major with 27 years of honorable service. Reel is a life-member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, American Ex-prisoners of War Inc., and Korean Ex-prisoners of War, Inc.*

## Buffalo Soldiers taught him about soldiering and history

Visit the DoD “Home for Heroes” web site at [www.defenselink.mil/specials/heroes/](http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/heroes/).

*Photo and story by Rudi Williams*

*American Forces Press Service*

**WASHINGTON** — John E. Wright, 83, thought he knew how to soldier until he met the “old troopers” of the 9th Cavalry “Buffalo Soldiers” Regiment in 1938. They showed him a thing or two about soldiering and threw in a history lesson about the saga of African Americans on the battlefield.

The retired Army 1st sergeant, a resident of the Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Home here since 1969, said his more than 31 years of military experience, including World War II and the Korean War, can’t touch what Buffalo Soldiers endured and accomplished on the Western frontier.

“I was a buck sergeant and thought I could really soldier, but those old Buffalo Soldiers taught me much. They were the cream of the crop. Their fathers and grandfathers were in the old 9th and 10th Cavalry regiments when those units were formed in 1866. They not only taught me how to ride, they taught me how to really soldier.”

One of his worse memories is from the Korean War when he was a 1st sergeant of a 2nd Infantry Division company. Two days after sending some men into battle, Wright received a call telling him he needed to go out and see what happened to his men.

“That was the most horrible thing to see — all those young men sprawled out dead with playing cards scattered around them,” Wright said. “They must have been playing cards and the Koreans crept up and killed them. I’ll never forget that because I told them not to take those cards to the field.”

Wright said, as an African American, he went through “many nasty experiences” he doesn’t like to think about, including officers, noncommissioned officer and troops using the “N” word. But, he said, “Everybody is not like that. I met some mean people, but there were a lot of good people, too.”

Some of the demons of war followed him into retirement in 1968. “It took me a long time to get over that German trying to kill me and those troops killed in Korea,” Wright said. “I’d wake up in cold sweats, and my wife, God bless her and rest her precious soul in heaven, said you must go to the hospital. They didn’t give me any medicine. The doctor gave my wife a whistle and told her, ‘When he starts having nightmares, stand over him and blow this whistle as loud as you can.’ She did a few times, and you know, that healed me.”



**John E. Wright**